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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Pickling Pointers." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A.

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Of all the preserved products that you will be putting up from the garden surplus this summer, of all the canned fruits and vegetables, the jellies, jams, marmalades, preserves and pickles, pickles probably have the least food value. But don't let that stop you from pickling some fruits and vegetables this season, to liven up next winter's meals. Food value is important, but it's not the only thing to consider in meal planning. When you think what pickles add in zest and spicy flavor, especially when you have to keep down the cost of meals and therefore must use a good deal of bland food -- when you consider this side of the question, then pickles certainly have their place on your pantry shelves.

I have collected from the specialists some points on home-made pickles which, I hope, will be helpful when you start at this job. Whether you are making fruit pickles or vegetable pickles, whether you are making them sweet, sour, mixed, or plain, you need fresh, high quality fruits and vegetables to start with. Sort your fruit and your vegetables for size and stage of ripeness. For instance, with fruits keep the ripest in one lot. When you are taking chopped vegetable pickles, the size of course doesn't count. But if you are pickling vegetables whole, get fresh vegetables of uniform size. This isn't just for the sake of appearance. It is so that the salt, or spicy sirup, or the vinegar can penetrate and season them evenly.

And that brings me to one of the main ideas in pickle making. The object of the whole process is to get the spicy tart flavor to penetrate through and through the fruit or vegetable. Now, if you are making pickled peaches or crabapples, you do this by cooking the fruit in sirup seasoned with vinegar and spice. But if you are making pickles from cucumbers and many other vegetables, you brine them, either by the short method just over night, or by the long method which takes from two to six weeks for fermenting and curing. If you want to make good crisp dill pickles, you use the long method. The salt draws out the juice of the cucumber slowly. Then the brine, well flavored with dill and vinegar, takes the place of the original cucumber juice.

Point number two is about the spice. A blend of several kinds of spices gives a much pleasanter and more interesting flavor than a large quantity of one spice. And remember that the flavor increases in the pickles as they stand in storage in the pantry. So don't use too much spice to start with. Also, spice tends to make pickles dark as they stand. To avoid this in making pickled watermelon rind, tie the spices in a bag and drop the bag into the boiling sirup as the pickles cook. Then leave out the spices when you put these pickles into jars to store.

Point number three is about the vinegar and sugar. Use good quality, fresh, clear cider vinegar for pickling, if you want the best flavor. Or, if you are making those little pearly-white pickled onions, use distilled vinegar, as clear as water. Avoid any vinegar that stands long enough to get cloudy and full of

mother. As for the sugar, use plain white granulated sugar. I know that some of those old-time pickle recipes passed down from grandmother called for brown sugar, but that was the only kind of sugar that people had for common use in those days. Brown sugar gives a strong flavor and dark-colored pickles. White granulated sugar is better for pickle making.

Now a few special suggestions about cooking pickles. The first rule is: Don't cook them any longer than you have to. Long cooking actually boils off the delicate flavor of the spices and it often makes the pickle soft and mushy. Many pickles require no cooking at all, but for those that do, boil them the shortest possible time. The delicious spicy smell in the kitchen during pickling season is pleasant enough for poets to write about. But have you ever stopped to think that the more of this good smell you enjoy, the more flavor goes off into the air and the less the pickles will have when you open the jar?

Now for one last suggestion about your home-made pickles. It's about storage. If you have a good cold place to keep your pickles, probably you can keep them unsealed in stone jars or crocks. But if you have only a rather warm closet, you'll need to seal them in air-tight jars just as you do other canned goods.

Now let's wind up our pickle chat with the best recipe I know for pickled peaches.

8 pounds of peaches
4 pounds of sugar
2 quarts of vinegar

8 two-inch pieces of stick
cinnamon, and
Cloves

I'll repeat that list of five. (Repeat.)

Select firm white peaches, preferably clingstones. Wash them well. Remove the thin skin with a sharp knife, and stick 2 cloves into each peach. Cook the vinegar, cinnamon and sugar together for 10 minutes -- or until the sirup is fairly thick. Add the peaches. Cook them gently until tender, but not broken. Then let them stand in the sirup overnight. In the morning, drain the sirup from the peaches and pack the fruit into sterilized jars. Boil the sirup rapidly until thick and pour it over the peaches in the jars. Seal, label, and store in a cool place. Allow the pickled peaches to stand several weeks to develop flavor before serving.

If you have any special questions about home-made pickles, write the Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D. C.

Monday: "Cooking Garden Vegetables for Economy."

